

Frantisek Kowanitz And Gertruda Kowanitzova



This photo was taken in Prague in October 1941, on the wedding day of my sister Gertruda Kowanitzova, nee Kovanicova. You can see her here with her husband Frantisek Kowanitz.

My sister was seven years older than me. I think she went to a Czech high school and then to a private school of advertising. She then got a job in an office somewhere and drew for fashion magazines, from which she earned a living on the side.

She was very clever and good with her hands. She could speak French and German and was really smart and beautiful. She could also play the piano, even though we didn't have one. We liked each other a lot, but we only realized this during the war, when it was too late for everything.

In October 1941, my sister married the Jewish man Frantisek Kowanitz in Vinohrady Town Hall. It was a civil wedding, and, for the occasion, I got some leather gloves and silk stockings. They got a red dinner service from Aunt Elza, which I still have to this day. From another aunt, my sister got a gas oven, as well as an embroidered lace tablecloth with twelve covers, which was - and still is - very expensive.

Frantisek was born in 1916; he was a distant relative. He worked as a chief clerk and was in the coal business. By the time I met him he was no longer allowed to do his job. We all lived together. I didn't like him at first, because they talked a lot and were all very jovial while I had to do the dishes.

I was about 13 and I kept a diary in which I wrote that I didn't like him because I had to be in the kitchen all the time. My sister probably read it, because he started coming into the kitchen after that and said things like 'You're my sister-in-law' and 'Dear sister-in-law', so I liked him a lot then.

Frantisek was really good-looking and clever. He was a fine person. But we didn't know each other too well. My sister and me didn't understand each other too well either, on account of the big age difference between us. By the time we had started to see eye-to-eye, we were in Terezin.

They obviously got married quickly because deportations were already taking place at that time and they wanted to go together. Immediately after the wedding, Frantisek was sent to a work camp [forced labor camp] in Lipa and then to Terezin. My sister went to Terezin in December 1941.

The two of them met again in Terezin, and they even had a baby girl, Jana Ivana, in 1943. They were sent directly from Terezin to the gas chamber on the last transport, in October, 1944.